

ITEM 9-B

PLANNING BOARD STAFF REPORT

DATE: March 14, 2011

TO: Honorable President and Members of the
Planning Board

FROM: Margaret Kavanaugh-Lynch, Planning Services Manager
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APPLICATION: PLN011-0065 – 2428 Central Avenue –
Applicant– Resources for Community Development

ZONING DISTRICT: C-C – Community Commercial District Zoning

GENERAL PLAN: Community Commercial

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Planning Board is considering a major design review application for the renovation of the existing 62 unit Islander Motel into 62 units of affordable workforce housing. This project will include interior upgrades to the existing units, exterior renovation of the main building as well as changes to the parking and landscaping on site.

BACKGROUND

The structure located at 2428 Central Avenue was granted a variance in January 20, 1971 to allow the inclusion of kitchens in its proposed motel rooms, which as stated in the original staff report, “essentially created an apartment building”. The variance was approved and the project was constructed in May of 1971. Building plans submitted to the city as well as subsequent financial documents all referred to the project as either units or apartments. The building has been used as a motel since 1971.

In 1981, the site was improved to include 2,220 square feet of office space in the surface parking area, reducing the amount of required parking spaces from 62 to 55 parking spaces.

The Draft Housing Element includes this site as an opportunity site for affordable housing.

In 2010, the Community Improvement Commission (CIC) and Housing Authority identified this property as a possible future location for 62 units of affordable workforce housing. On November 16, 2010 the CIC authorized the Interim Executive Director to negotiate and execute a purchase and sale agreement with the property owner. The Purchase and Sale Agreement was signed on March 4, 2011.

In January 2011, the Planning Board approved a Use Determination stating the structure located at 2428 Central Avenue is a legal non conforming use as a 62 unit multi-family building.

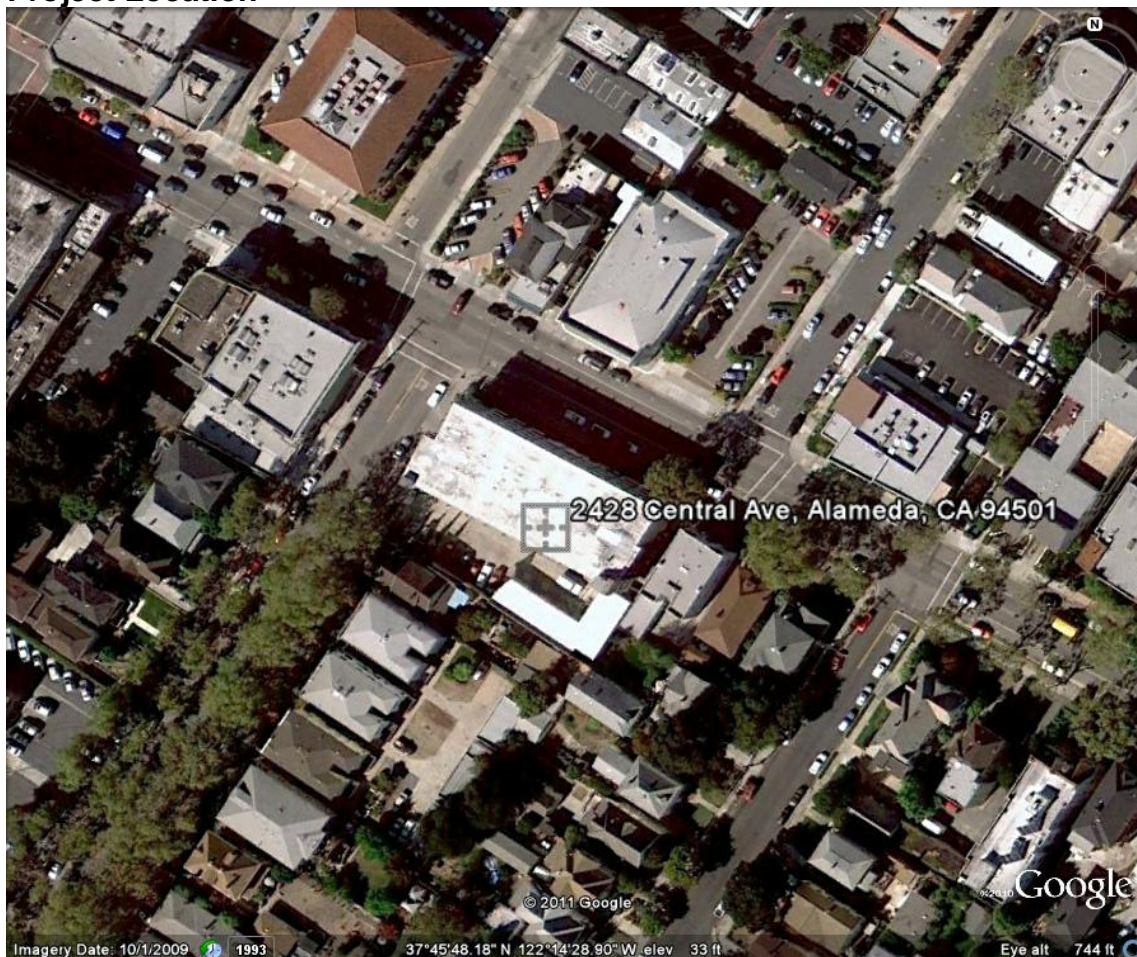
In March 2011, the CIC and the Housing Authority Board of Commissioners approved an Owner Participation Agreement with Resources for Community Development (RCD), the Housing Authority's non-profit development partner and applicant for the Major Design Review permit.

A tenant meeting and a community meeting were held on March 9 and 10, 2011.

Existing Conditions

The subject project is located at 2428 Central Avenue. In the C-C Commercial District. It is located two blocks from Park Street retail and transit services.

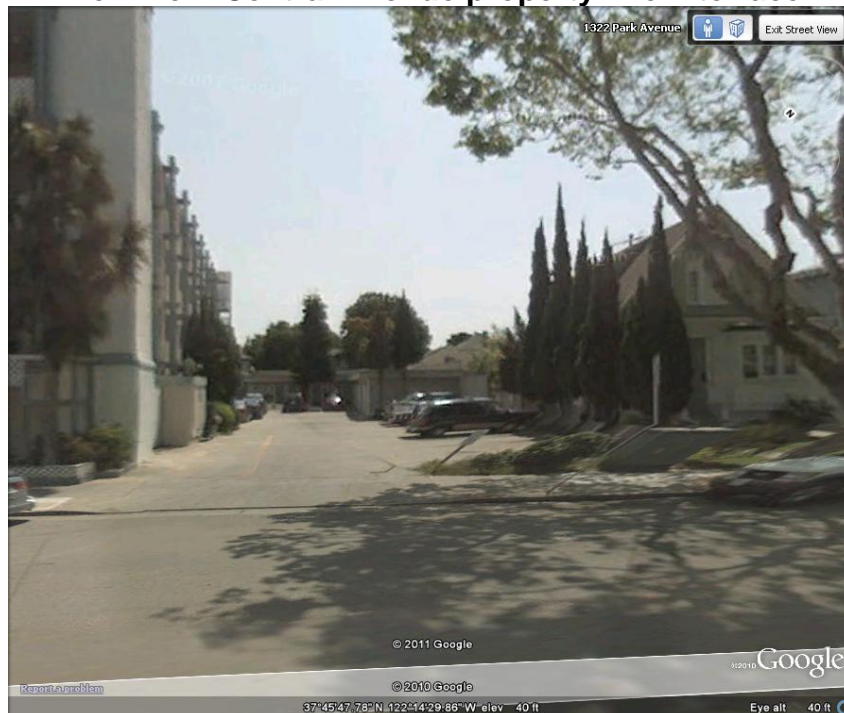
Project Location



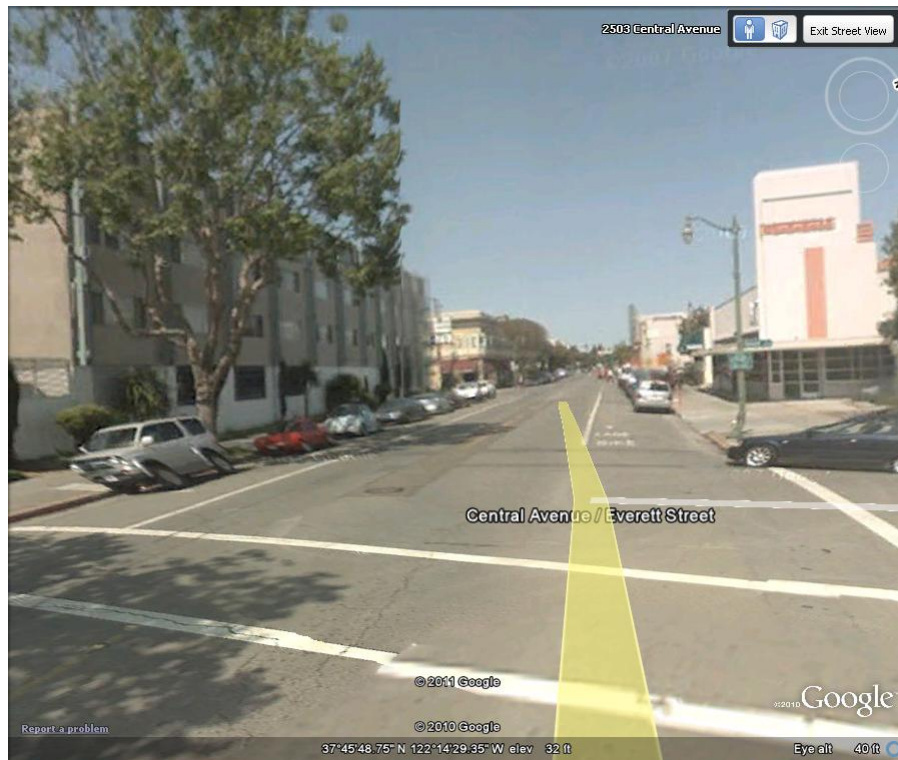
The following photos illustrate the different architectural styles of the abutting and confronting properties of this subject property:



View from Central Avenue property line interface



View from Park Avenue property line interface



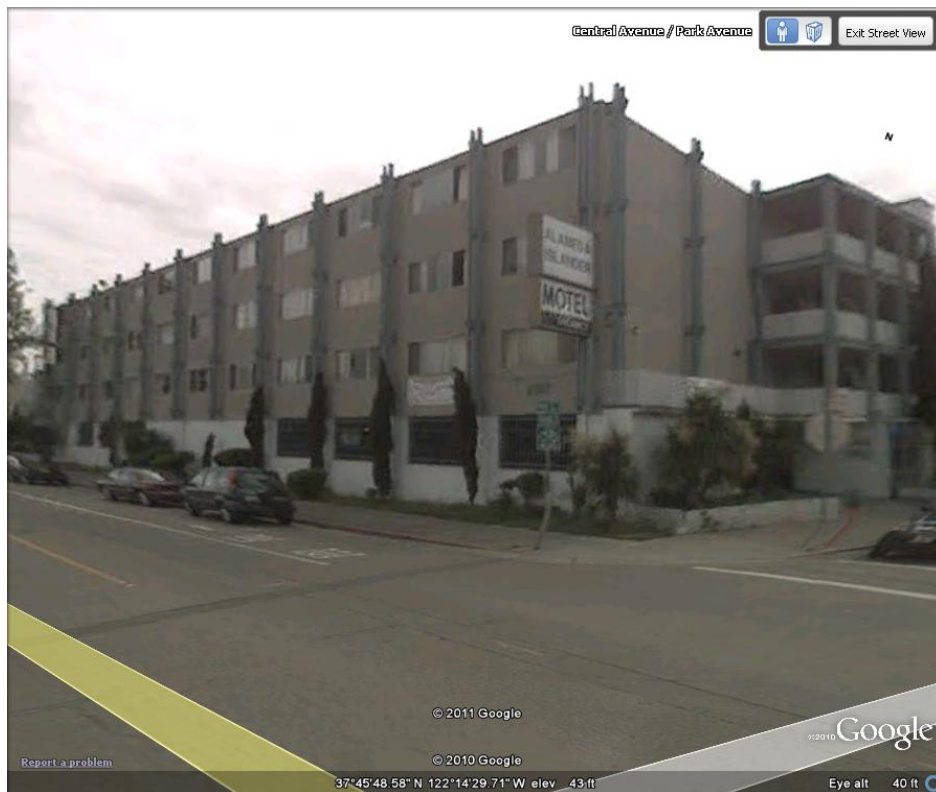
View from Central Avenue



View of building Across Central Avenue



View of Building Directly Across Park Avenue



View of project site from Central Avenue

ANALYSIS

Current Regulations and Design

The primary structure is a four story 62 unit building. Its location and height are not proposed to change. However, the exterior of the structure, the parking, and landscape in areas are all to be improved as part of the project scope.



Exterior Finishes

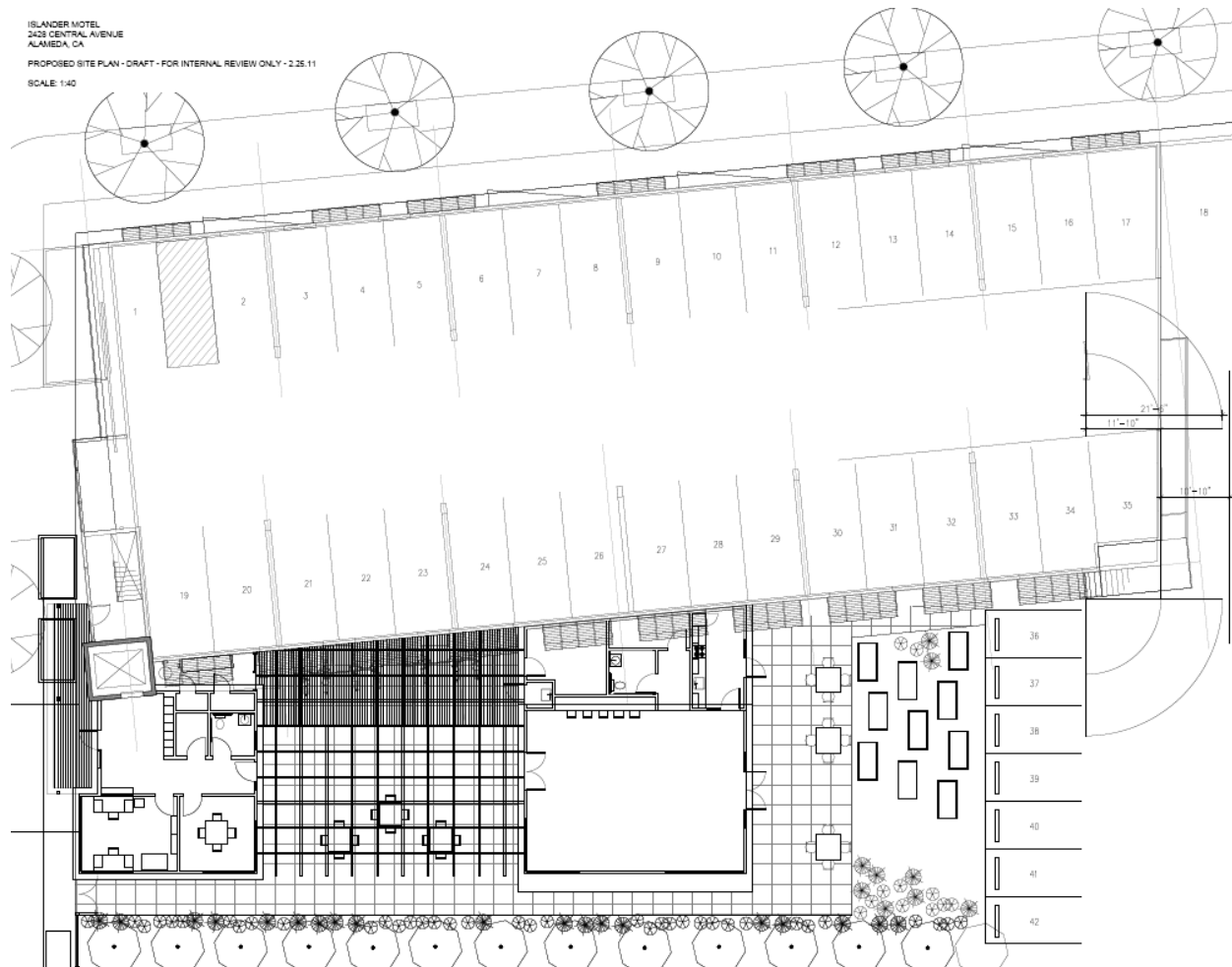
The exterior of the structure will undergo a significant alteration. The cement block exterior is being replaced with earth tone horizontal bands, complemented with a vertical elevator element. Screening the stair wells on the Park Avenue elevation are horizontal metal architectural elements, adding shadow and depth to the façade. The vehicular entry echoes the metal banding, reinforcing the horizontal theme. On the ground floor, wrapping around the facade from Park to Central Avenue is a brown tile base. The architect will give a presentation on the colors and materials at the Board meeting.

Neighborhood Context

As evidenced by the photos, there are at least three different types of architecture immediately adjacent to the subject property. Modern, Craftsman Bungalow, Prairie and more surround the site, which is one of the more architecturally inferior buildings in the area. There really is not one predominant style in this location, but rather the property represents a classic transition site, between residential and commercial uses and forms. The redesign of the exterior adds visual interest and detailing not present before, and additional massing and height is minimized. The structure also retains the form of the streetscape, maintaining its long rectangular mass along Central Avenue. Further, while the building retains its residential nature and serves as a buffer from the smaller

residential structures on Park Avenue, it also maintains the urban corner location needed for the commercial corridor on Central Avenue.

Site Plan/Parking/Landscaping



Included with the Planning Board packet for this project are reductions of the elevations site plan, and floor plans.

Parking

Pursuant to Alameda Municipal Code, Section 30-7, parking for affordable housing projects may be reduced from the standard parking requirements listed in the zoning ordinance; if the applicant can supply information that illustrates that need for parking is also reduced by the type of housing being constructed. A site manager's office and community room are proposed on the western side of the existing building. These new amenities will be used by on site residents, only. The existing office at the rear of the site will be removed. The applicant is proposing 42 parking spaces. To support this decrease from 55 parking spaces, staff noted all studio apartments will now be occupied by no more than two persons and this will be a reduction from the current number of residents currently residing in the building. In addition, the applicant provided staff with 3

examples of other bay area affordable housing projects for very low income and senior residents, shown in the table on the next page.

Parking at RCD's Senior Properties:

	Villa Vasconcellos	Margaret Breland Homes	Mable Howard Apartments
Total number of housing units	70	28	40
Total parking offered/assigned	39	8	9
Ratio (parking offered/units)	0.557	0.285	0.225
Number on parking wait list	10	5	6
Total parking demand	49	12	15
Ratio (demand/units)	0.7	0.428	0.375

The table concludes that in each example less than one parking space is needed. (This determination is illustrated in the ratio of parking demand that shows not only what has been provided, but the actual number of residents waiting to have a parking space. Staff finds that the 42 spaces will be sufficient amount for the proposed project,

It is noted that the amount of street parking in this neighborhood is very limited. Adjacent commercial uses that either have pay parking lots or no off-street parking available as well as residential uses without driveways or garages have led to a low vacancy rate for on -street parking. Staff worked with the applicant to take steps to ensure that the new residents of the project would have additional incentives and restrictions to not exceed the amount of parking provided on site. So, in addition to the 42 off-street parking spaces, the applicant has agreed to provide:

- 1) Annual Bus Passes for AC Transit (Easy Passes) for every resident.
- 2) The property owner will implement an on-going program that will open the gated parking area to the business employees in the area on a space available basis. Since it is a housing complex the parking demand from residents will be less during the day and therefore may be opened to others during the business hours of (8 am to 5 pm) Monday through Friday. Residents with vehicles will be issued a parking permit and each month any un-used spaces will be made available to the local business employees, by permit, at a minimal cost. To verify that the program is diligently pursued, the property owner will be required to submit a yearly report describing the use and implementation of this program to Planning and Public Works staff.
- 3) If a Residential Permit Parking Program (RPPP) is created in this neighborhood in the future, the property owner will be prohibited from joining in the program. This address will not be issued RPPP passes.

Revisions to the Existing Building

A new office space and community building are proposed as part of new site plan. The office will encapsulate the elevator shaft thereby controlling the pedestrian access point to the residential units. It will also continue the urban building line along Park Avenue and provide additional visual oversight with the street. Both the office and the new community area will be utilized by residents of the project exclusively.

Landscaping and Voluntary Green Components

As shown on the site plan, a number of landscaping and green amenities have been added to the site. In terms of hardscape, two common patios; one with a partial shade structure and one with full sun have been added in the former parking area. Plantings noted on the plans will be consistent with the Bay Friendly Landscape regulations. Extended sun shade balconies have been updated on the southern elevation to enjoy the view of the community space as well as to add passive shading/cooling for the units along that façade.

In addition, the applicant is voluntarily incorporating solar thermal collectors on the roof to incorporate solar hot water heaters into the project. They also propose covered bike parking and a community garden with raised planters. Finally, while it is not clear if funding would be available for photo voltaic arrays on the roof, the applicant is including all necessary conduit to facilitate the inclusion of these arrays at a later date.

Staff is recommending approval of the major design review application and suggests the following finding in support of its recommendation:

Design Review Findings

Alameda Municipal Code Section 30-37.5(a) requires the following finding for projects subject to Design Review approval:

The proposed project is compatible with the site, adjacent or neighboring buildings and surroundings, and promotes harmonious transitions in scale and character between designated land uses.

Alameda Municipal Code Section 30-37.5(c) provides that compliance with this requirement may be determined by reviewing the project for consistency with the principles and standards as articulated in the City of Alameda Guide to Residential Design. The project has been determined to be consistent with the City of Alameda Guide to Residential Design on the following basis:

1. City of Alameda Guide to Residential Design - Guiding Parameters

First Parameter: The range of possibilities is established by the neighborhood context.

As evidenced by the photos, there are at least three different types of architecture immediately adjacent to the subject property. Modern, Craftsman Bungalow, Prairie and more surround the site, which is one of the more architecturally inferior building in the area. There really is not one predominant style in this location, but rather it represents a classic transition site, between residential and commercial uses and forms. The redesign of the exterior adds visual interest and detailing not present before, but minimal additional massing and height. It also retains the form of the streetscape, maintaining its long rectangular mass along Central Avenue. Further, while the building retains its residential nature and its buffer from the smaller residential structures on Park Avenue, it also maintains the urban corner location needed for the commercial corridor on Central Avenue.

Second Parameter: As buildings fit into neighborhoods, additions fit into buildings.

This Guiding Parameter applies to additions to existing buildings. While there is a new office and community room introduced to the site, they are one story and meet the required setbacks of the district. In general, this building maintains its existing bulk and massing.

Third Parameter: Valued original architectural character is maintained by the preservation and restoration of the original fabric.

This Guiding Parameter applies to the restoration and preservation of existing historic buildings. In this case, the project is not a historic building nor a listed resource. Redesign of this building's exterior is a benefit to the surrounding neighborhood, adding a quality updated modern theme to the eclectic mix already present.

- **The form, mass and style of the second-story addition must relate to both that of the existing building and those of the surrounding neighborhood.**

The project consists of a renovated 62 unit residence, with minimal impact on its existing bulk and mass. The design incorporates numerous architectural features to break up the visual mass of the structure, updating its articulation and color palette.

- **For non-historic buildings, a concurrent remodel of the entire building, into a different "style" is often a viable option to achieve a cohesive design. And while such new "style" need not match the surrounding non-historic buildings (e. g., a "new" Mediterranean revival may be introduced into a neighborhood of 1950's ranch buildings) the scale and massing should not clash with the dominant verticality of the neighborhood.**

This project is an excellent example of the utilization of an existing structure, keeping the predominant bulk and massing, but redesigning the exterior from a utilitarian design to a updated modern theme. The new theme, the architectural styling and the green amenities all reflect Alameda's commitment to its priorities of superior architectural

standards, thoughtful in-fill and implementation of sustainable practices in the built environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the CEQA guideline section 15332 (In-fill Development Projects) and Public Resources Code (PRC) section 21159.21 (Affordable Housing Project Exemption).

PUBLIC NOTICE

A notice for this hearing was mailed to property owners and residents within 300 feet of this site, published in the Alameda Journal and posted at the subject property. Staff has been contacted by one business and one residential property owner regarding this project. The consensus of the discussions were all positive. In addition, the applicant sponsored a tenant meeting on March 9th and a community meeting on March 10th of this year.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve Major Design Review PLN11-0065, permitting application for the renovation of the existing Islander Motel into a 62 unit affordable housing project. This project will include interior upgrades to the existing units, exterior renovation of the main building as well as changes to the parking and landscaping on site

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:

MARGARET KAVANAUGH-LYNCH
PLANNING SERVICES MANAGER

Attachments:

1. Resolution
2. Project Plans